

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 226

CE 079 973

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TITLE Peer Vocabulary Building Teams. Action Research Monograph.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 18p.; In: Action Research Monographs. Complete Set. Pennsylvania Action Research Network, 1998-99. the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. A Learning from Practice Project; see CE 079 962.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; Cooperative Learning; Group Activities; *Literacy Education; *Peer Teaching; Pretests Posttests; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Records (Forms); Teacher Researchers; *Teamwork; *Vocabulary Development
IDENTIFIERS *General Aptitude Test Battery; Pennsylvania; 353 Project

ABSTRACT

An adult educator in Butler, Pennsylvania, noticed that, although students who took the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) seemed highly motivated to improve their basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, only 2 of her 20 students who took the GATB made a concerted effort to develop their vocabulary. Thinking that those two students were a peer vocabulary-building team because they were brothers, the instructor undertook an action research project to increase students' vocabulary skills by using a peer vocabulary-building team system. During the 4-month study, the instructor had students spend 15 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team. Data were collected in three ways: field observations, interviews with team members, and pre- and posttests to measure vocabulary gains. Of the 16 students enrolled in the instructor's GATB preparation class, 12 participated in the peer vocabulary-building team system. After 4 months, all 12 students demonstrated word recognition gains ranging from 23% to 583%. (Attachments constituting approximately 60% of this document contain a chart detailing the 9 aptitudes measured by 12 tests in the GATB and a student vocabulary progress record.) (MN)

Action Research Monograph

ED 440 226

**PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99**

Monograph Title:

Peer Vocabulary Building Teams

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A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

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PRODUCT

“Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers”

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Pennsylvania Action Research Monograph

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

While students taking the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) are highly motivated to improve basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from developing vocabulary skills. This study is an effort to increase vocabulary skills by using a peer vocabulary building team system. Every student participating in this system increased word recognition from between twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent.

II. PROBLEM

I work part-time as an ABE/GED instructor for Midwestern IU IV at Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church on McKean Street in Butler. Class meets on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and operates from mid September to the end of May. The setting is rural.

Two of the county's largest industrial employers are the Armco Steel Corporation and the Penreco Oil Refinery. Both of these companies use Job Family 4 of the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) as one of the major criteria for interviewing and hiring new staff and have designated the Butler Job Center to serve as their GATB testing site. Test dates for the GATB test are scheduled several times each year. If a prospective employee does not earn a high enough score in Job Family 4 of the test to warrant an interview with these companies, he/she is given an opportunity to take one retest.

The Job Service refers most of the students who attend my class. They already have their high school diploma and, in many cases, have completed some kind of post high school training program. They come to class for the specific purpose of improving their skills and getting a better score on the GATB.

While students are highly motivated to improve their basic skills in mathematics and spatial relations, they shy away from working to develop their vocabulary skills. Since the ability to identify synonyms and antonyms is part of the score for Job Family 4, their test results would improve if they would devote some study time increasing their vocabulary.

In case the reader is unfamiliar with the GATB, a short overview of the test follows: The GATB measures nine aptitudes using twelve 6-minute tests. Seventy three percent of the score for Job Family 4 includes the scores from the verbal, numerical (arithmetic reason & computation),

and spatial aptitudes. The remaining 27% of the score in Job Family 4 include mark making, manual dexterity (placing and turning), and finger dexterity (assemble and disassemble). I have included a chart that names the twelve aptitudes and a breakdown of the aptitudes included in each of the five Job Families as Attachment A.

The people who want to work for Armco and Penreco probably have a higher aptitude for and are more interested in solving numerical, mechanical, and three dimensional problems because they went to the job center to secure a technical or manufacturing job. During our intake interview, most of these students share that they are not avid readers.

Students who study vocabulary might get a better score in Job Family 4 of the GATB and would increase their chances of receiving an interview for a job at Armco or Penreco.

I am always trying to improve my teaching methods. If I could find a way to encourage students who want to improve their GATB scores to study and improve their vocabulary, I would become a better ABE teacher.

III. PLANNING

In addition to completing all of the basic intake forms for program accountability, I administer the math section of the TABE locator test followed by the appropriate math level of Form 7 of the complete battery of the TABE test. The information provided from the TABE Individual Diagnostic Style Form serves as a guide in each student's individual education plan, and I use a variety of study aids to develop math and spatial relations skills. One of the most useful and popular study tools is the GATB study curriculum, which was developed in 1991 by Marilyn Gentzler and Debra Hudson at the Centre County Vocational Technical School.

Rationale for what I plan to do: Approximately twenty students who have attended classes at Saint Andrew's took their GATB retest on October 16. Although each of these students knew that improving his vocabulary skills would, in turn, improve his score in Job Family 4, only two brothers made a concerted effort to increase their sight vocabulary. Following one of my suggestions, they made flash cards to quiz each other on word recognition. Their efforts paid off, and they both came back to class after the test to let me know how much easier the vocabulary section of the test was after they had studied together. In fact, the Job Center noticed such a drastic improvement that they called me to ask what these two students did to improve their vocabulary

scores.

These brothers had a built-in peer vocabulary building team. Since their scores improved so much after using flash cards, I thought, why not create peer vocabulary building teams in my class and see what happens?

I will begin the project when students return to class on January 4, 1998. I will stop collecting data on April 30.

Methods used to collect the data

Field notes, interviews with students who work in a vocabulary building team, and tests of learner performance (pre- and post-test of vocabulary gains).

Baseline

Before we start using peer vocabulary building teams, students will mark the number of words they know from the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests. Unfortunately, I don't remember where I found this list, but I have used it for years, and students have found it most helpful. (See Attachment B)

Criteria for success

After fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team, students will realize at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests.

Constraints

The Job Center cannot announce the date of the next GATB test until approximately three weeks before the test is actually scheduled. Since my class operates on an open enrollment basis, some students may not attend enough classes to participate in fifteen 30-minute study sessions. If this happens, I will still administer a post-test and note the number of study sessions they attended.

Approval

My supervisor Elaine Nagel has already given her approval to this project.

I will explain the rationale for using the peer vocabulary building team system and ask students to participate in the project. Students are regularly pre- and post-tested in other content areas, and they are generally receptive to any study aid we use in class. I'm confident that most, if not all, students will respond favorably to participating in this research.

Colleagues to discuss and evaluate work

Elaine Nagel, my supervisor Dan LaPorte, the counselor for my class and Charlene Fleming, an instructor who works with me on Thursday evenings.

Problem statement

Will every student who attend ABE classes to study for the GATB test show at least a 20% increase in the number of words they can identify in the list of the 250 Most Commonly Used Words on Standardized Vocabulary Tests after fifteen 30-minute study sessions with a peer vocabulary team?

IV. ACTION/ RESULTS

Sixteen students registered in my class to study for the GATB test. Four students did not complete a vocabulary recognition post-test. Two of these students did not want to work on a vocabulary building team. I think that the reason why they declined to study with the group is that they were embarrassed that they didn't know many of the words. Both of these students took a copy of the definitions home with them, but I'm not certain if they studied the words. Another student completed the pre-test, but he didn't come to class regularly and did not study with a team. The last student who did not complete the post-test knew almost all of the words when he took the pre-test and decided to devote his class time to studying for the math sections of the GATB.

Following is a chart to show student achievement:

NAME	Vocabulary Team Sessions	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	% of Increase	Study at Home?
Eric	5	116	143	23%	No
Shawn	9	58	111	91%	No
Brian	4	28	90	221%	Yes
Larry	3	91	173	90%	Yes
James	16	6	41	583%	No
Terry	1	230	DNF	N/A	N/A
Lenny	5	140	190	35%	Yes
Charles	none	DNF	DNF	N/A	N/A
Rob	5	84	117	39%	No
Rhonda	10	75	121	61%	No
Jim	none	DNF	DNF	N/A	N/A
Randy	14	41	217	429%	Yes
Kris	8	44	121	175%	Yes
Ron	5	33	73	121%	No
Jay	2	70	DNF	N/A	N/A
Lisa	10	85	159	87%	Yes

Every student who participated in the Vocabulary Building Teams increased his word recognition skills by twenty-three to five hundred eighty three percent. In addition, students laughed more. They came to class more often and became cheerleaders for their team members. Many students who studied their words at home got their families involved in their learning. They were proud of themselves for their accomplishments. They felt more confident about taking the GATB test.

V. REFLECTION

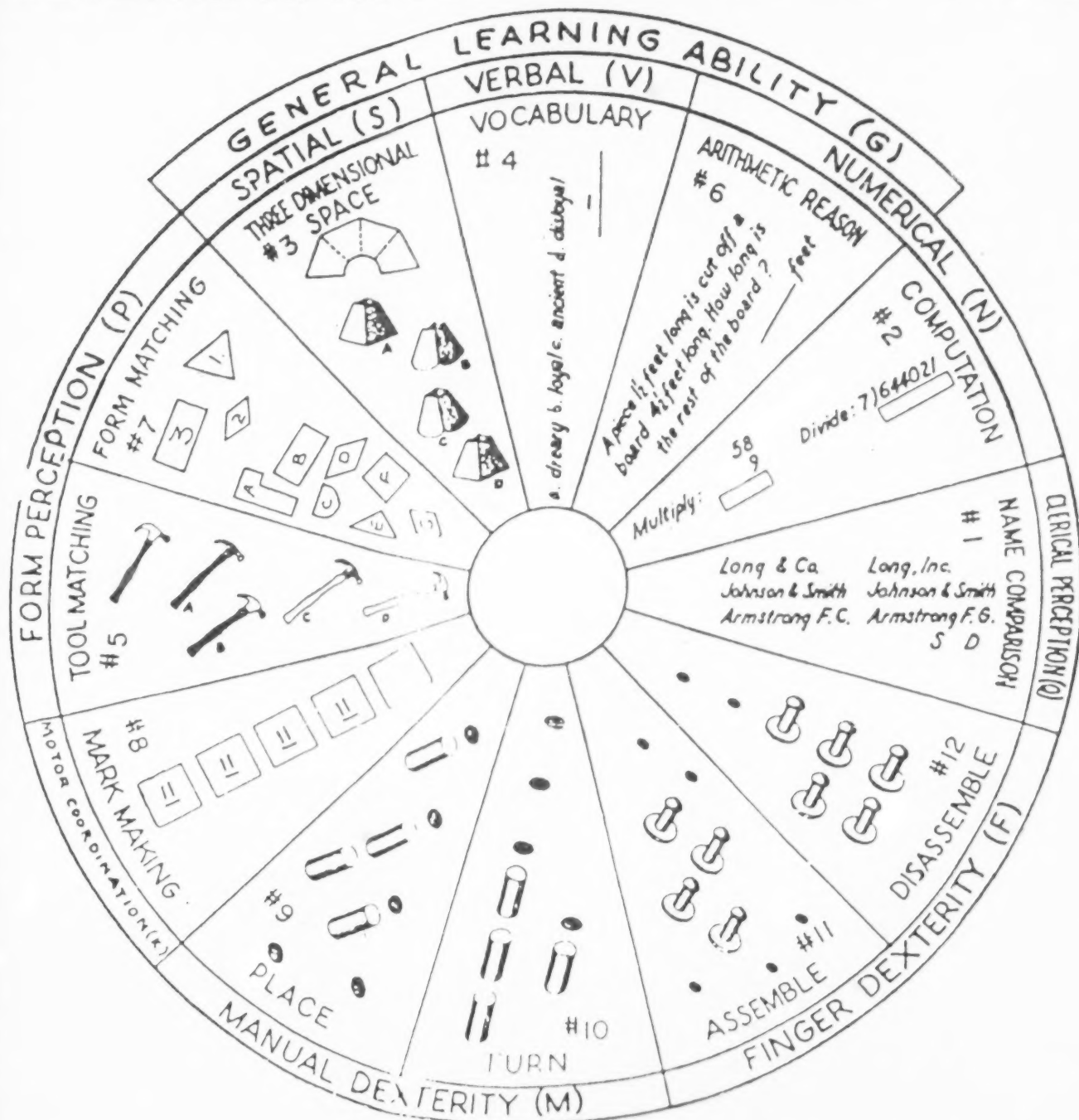
This project illustrates the theory of Occum's Razor that states the simplest solution is usually the best. Although students did not have enough time to participate in fifteen sessions with their peer vocabulary team, they all learned new words, and they had fun in the process.

However, I would do one thing differently. Just because students learned the meanings of new words does not guarantee that their GATB test scores would improve. The verbal section of the GATB test measures, not only a person's ability to recognize the definitions of words, but also his ability to identify pairs of synonyms and antonyms.

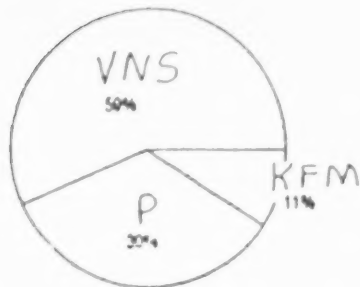
Since I am confident that students will work in teams, I have asked my supervisor, Elaine Nagel, to purchase some vocabulary building study aides for next year that focus on synonym and antonym identification. I can see two benefits from using these books next year. First, students will be able to learn words and practice using them as they will appear on their GATB test. Second, those students who shied away from working on a peer vocabulary team might be more inclined to participate if they also had a workbook to use.

All of the students came together to make this project successful. Next year, I hope that I will be able to document the same student achievement when I add vocabulary workbooks to the recipe of peer vocabulary teams.

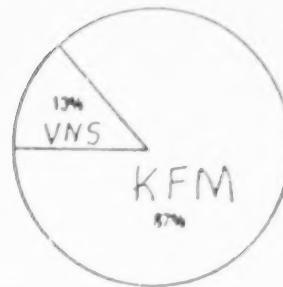
NINE APTITUDES MEASURED BY TWELVE TESTS IN THE GENERAL APTITUDE TEST BATTERY B-1002



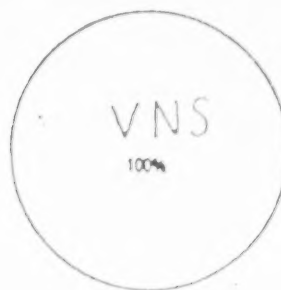
JOB FAMILY 1
Set-up Jobs



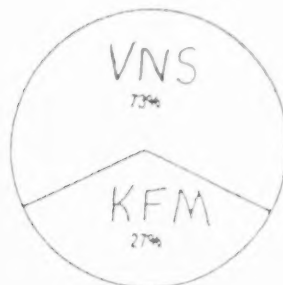
JOB FAMILY 2
Feeding-Offbearing Jobs



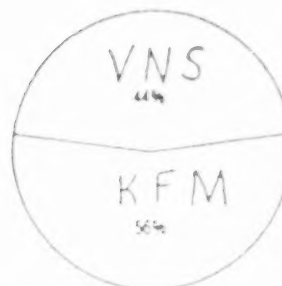
JOB FAMILY 3
Professional & Supervisory Jobs



JOB FAMILY 4
Skilled Trades & Clerical Jobs



JOB FAMILY 5
Semi-Skilled Jobs



ATTACHMENT B

Name _____	_____	_____	oblivious
Date _____	Date _____	_____	indifferent
_____	_____	_____	obscure
_____	_____	_____	ostentatious
_____	_____	_____	objective
_____	_____	_____	contentious
_____	_____	_____	revere
_____	_____	_____	discriminate
_____	_____	_____	reprove
_____	_____	_____	embellish
_____	_____	_____	pessimism
_____	_____	_____	denounce
_____	_____	_____	cursory
_____	_____	_____	innovate
_____	_____	_____	profligate
_____	_____	_____	stagnant
_____	_____	_____	miser
_____	_____	_____	candid
_____	_____	_____	jocular
_____	_____	_____	impartial
_____	_____	_____	fracas
_____	_____	_____	discern
_____	_____	_____	caricature
_____	_____	_____	vulnerable
_____	_____	_____	corroborate
_____	_____	_____	hypocritical
_____	_____	_____	precarious
_____	_____	_____	eccentric
_____	_____	_____	expository
_____	_____	_____	disdain
_____	_____	_____	bolster
_____	_____	_____	abstract
_____	_____	_____	daunt
_____	_____	_____	valid
_____	_____	_____	apathy
_____	_____	_____	subtle
_____	_____	_____	ambiguous
_____	_____	_____	enigma
_____	_____	_____	fervent
_____	_____	_____	inevitable
_____	_____	_____	vagrant
_____	_____	_____	inferred
_____	_____	_____	undermine

_____	_____diverse	_____	_____prodigal
_____	_____articulate	_____	_____assess
_____	_____apprehensive	_____	_____deter
_____	_____benevolent	_____	_____complacent
_____	_____virulent	_____	_____contempt
_____	_____pious	_____	_____eloquent
_____	_____skeptical	_____	_____virtue
_____	_____provincial	_____	_____vital
_____	_____resignation	_____	_____guile
_____	_____illuminate	_____	_____biased
_____	_____resolution	_____	_____censor
_____	_____servile	_____	_____monotonous
_____	_____diligent	_____	_____trivial
_____	_____refute	_____	_____profound
_____	_____anarchy	_____	_____enhance
_____	_____miser	_____	_____phenomenon
_____	_____discord	_____	_____enduring
_____	_____inclined	_____	_____advocate
_____	_____perceptive	_____	_____solitude
_____	_____superficial	_____	_____tentative
_____	_____lucid	_____	_____contemporary
_____	_____immune	_____	_____provocative
_____	_____aesthetic	_____	_____adversary

_____	_____grave	_____	_____elusive
_____	_____banal	_____	_____facilitate
_____	_____depravity	_____	_____static
_____	_____temper	_____	_____ironic
_____	_____censure	_____	_____irrational
_____	_____extol	_____	_____dogmatic
_____	_____indulgent	_____	_____flagrant
_____	_____erratic	_____	_____frivolous
_____	_____insipid	_____	_____taciturn
_____	_____euphony	_____	_____infamous
_____	_____antagonism	_____	_____redundant
_____	_____arbitrary	_____	_____authoritarian
_____	_____austere	_____	_____exhaustive
_____	_____expedite	_____	_____reticent
_____	_____heresy	_____	_____fervor
_____	_____compromise	_____	_____scanty
_____	_____condescend	_____	_____dispassionate
_____	_____fallacious	_____	_____pragmatic
_____	_____intangible	_____	_____didactic
_____	_____arrogant	_____	_____deference
_____	_____compatible	_____	_____alleviate
_____	_____dubious	_____	_____vacillate
_____	_____solicit	_____	_____endorse

_____	conspicuous	_____	relevant
_____	negligence	_____	incoherent
_____	ephemeral	_____	mitigate
_____	relegate	_____	reprehensible
_____	futile	_____	augment
_____	condone	_____	engender
_____	tranquility	_____	deride
_____	dis dissent	_____	acclaim
_____	conciliate	_____	lethargic
_____	incessant	_____	fanatic
_____	disparity	_____	novel
_____	disparage	_____	solemn
_____	conventional	_____	ambivalent
_____	rigor	_____	indolence
_____	profuse	_____	benign
_____	expedient	_____	tedious
_____	fastidious	_____	amiable
_____	prosaic	_____	laud
_____	philanthropy	_____	caustic
_____	languid	_____	atrophy
_____	astute	_____	meander
_____	authentic	_____	instigate
_____	brevity	_____	heed

_____	_____virtuoso	_____	_____orthodox
_____	_____predecessor	_____	_____innate
_____	_____deplete	_____	_____preclude
_____	_____compliant	_____	_____efface
_____	_____inadvertent	_____	_____marred
_____	_____acquiesce	_____	_____ameliorate
_____	_____levity	_____	_____prodigious
_____	_____belittle	_____	_____concise
_____	_____extraneous	_____	_____immutable
_____	_____digress	_____	_____stoic
_____	_____emulate	_____	_____innocuous
_____	_____appease	_____	_____credulous
_____	_____sage	_____	_____blasphemy
_____	_____auspicious	_____	_____lax
_____	_____universal	_____	_____cryptic
_____	_____fickle	_____	_____hinder
_____	_____furtive	_____	_____esoteric
_____	_____remorse	_____	_____pretentious
_____	_____repress	_____	_____incongruous
_____	_____gullible	_____	_____unprecedented
_____	_____respite	_____	_____merger
_____	_____scrutinize	_____	_____pedestrian
_____	_____coalesce	_____	_____prudent

_____ exemplary
_____ sycophant
_____ neutral
_____ rescind
_____ retract
_____ fundamental
_____ rejuvenate
_____ contrite
_____ exemplify
_____ nullify
_____ vilify
_____ hypothetical
_____ nostalgic
_____ assuage
_____ saccharine
_____ stanza
_____ jeopardy
_____ supercilious
_____ avarice
_____ pivotal
_____ blithe
_____ scrupulous